



Congressman Xavier Becerra

REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S 31ST DISTRICT
AND SERVING AS ASSISTANT TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE



CONGRESSMAN BECERRA'S NEWSLETTER • CALIFORNIA'S 31ST DISTRICT • SUMMER/FALL 2007 • <http://Becerra.House.gov>



Dear Friends:

Change is good. ... Change is constructive. ... Change is progressive. Last November, you and countless others just like you across the country asked for change. Nine months into the new Congress, change is exactly what you are getting.

For the first time in a decade, a new minimum wage has been enacted. Over the next two years, 13 million Americans will directly or indirectly get a pay raise of over \$4,000 a year.

In an historic move, Congress made the single largest investment in veterans' health care and benefits (\$6.7 billion over the previous year) since the inception of the Veterans Affairs Administration.

After sitting on the shelf of the previous Congress for three years, each and every one of the 9/11 Commission's recommendations to help bring real security to our country are now law.

We changed the old Congress' course on higher education, children's healthcare and Iraq. Federal grants to pay for college tuition increased by over half a million. We will send to the President a bill to give 10 million children health insurance. And, but for the President's veto, America today would have a law in place setting forth a fixed timeline for the redeployment of our troops from Iraq.

This Congress' budget eliminates deficits by 2012 without raising taxes. We reinstated pay-as-you-go budgeting: we will not enact any new laws or programs unless we pay for them – no more government “credit card binges!”

This Congress recognizes its watchdog duties, and is challenging – finally – no-bid contracts to Halliburton and compelling the White House to come clean on the suspicious firing of eight talented U.S. attorneys.

Not a bad start even with the President getting in the way. Next on our agenda: climate change, energy conservation, fixing the alternative minimum tax and our broken immigration system, and requiring that **all** voting machines produce a paper trail to make sure your vote is counted.

As we can see, it won't be easy. There will be roadblocks. But you asked for change. And that is what I aim to deliver.

Sincerely,

XAVIER BECERRA
Member of Congress

Si desea esta información en español, por favor llame al (213) 483-1425.

CAPITOL IMPROVEMENTS IN AND AROUND WASHINGTON, D.C.



GUN MICROSTAMPING BRIEFING & DEMONSTRATION

In the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy, and shortly following the second anniversary of the conviction of the "Beltway Snipers," I arranged for a demonstration of the crime solving capabilities of gun microstamping technology. The event, which took place in the Rayburn House Office Building firing range on Friday, May 18, gave Todd Lizotte, the creator of microstamping technology, an opportunity to show how the system works to connect the dots for investigators of gun crimes. Internal surfaces of the gun etch tiny characters onto every fired bullet cartridge allowing law enforcement to identify the make, model and serial number of the gun from which it was fired. A single microstamped cartridge recovered at the scene of a crime can lead police to the gun – and the criminal that fired it. Currently I am working with Senator Ted Kennedy (MA) to craft legislation that would require gun manufacturers to implement this potentially life saving technology. The California Assembly passed similar legislation, A.B. 1471, "The Crime Gun Identification Act," on May 29, and the California Senate followed suit passing the legislation on September 10.



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi joined me and my Congressional Hispanic Caucus colleagues to discuss the effects of the minimum wage increase that we passed earlier this year. As the Assistant to the Speaker, I join Speaker Pelosi at the leadership table to help chart the course of Congress.

CONGRESSMAN BECERRA NAMED ASSISTANT TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

Back in January at the start of the 110th Congress, Speaker Nancy Pelosi nominated me to the senior leadership role of Assistant to the Speaker of the House. My colleagues in the Democratic Caucus then voted unanimously to have me serve in this role. In a press release announcing the appointment, the Speaker said, "Congressman Xavier Becerra's keen intellect and substantive policy expertise will be crucial in charting a new course for America's working families. As a member of the Ways and Means Committee, he has been a strong leader in mapping out a new direction on trade, Social Security, and federal taxes." As a member of the Leadership, I now have a coveted seat at the decision making table. And now you have a stronger voice in the people's house in Washington, D.C. I thank you for the chance to serve!

FIGHTING FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

There is little doubt in anyone's mind that we sorely need to fix our broken immigration system, which has allowed millions of undocumented immigrants to live and work in the shadows of our society for decades. I firmly believe that any reform must honor our proud history as a nation of immigrants. This May the Senate took up debate on a comprehensive proposal that would have started us on the path toward reform. As a member of House leadership, I held a series of listening sessions to better understand the needs and concerns of my colleagues as we prepared to begin work on a compromise with the Senate. Unfortunately, after several attempts, the closely divided Senate was unable to send a bill over to the House, effectively derailing hope that a comprehensive bill will be passed this summer. Despite this setback, I will continue to work as hard as I can to fix our immigration system.



Here, I describe the way microstamping works at my May 18 demonstration. Complete video coverage of the briefing is available on my Web site. Just click on "Becerra Broadcasts" to view the entire briefing.

LEGISLATION TO BAN GENE PATENTING

It was in February of 1953 when James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the structure of Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), the molecule that contains the genetic information of nearly all living organisms. Few discoveries have matched theirs in the understanding of the makeup of the human species. This discovery led to the 1990 founding of the Human Genome Project whose goal was to code three billion nucleotides contained in the human genome and to identify all the genes present in it. The Project's efforts have led to the discovery of approximately 35,000 genes.

Twenty percent of these genes have already been patented and we have absolutely no say in what those patent holders do with our genes. This cannot be what Watson and Crick intended. This is a serious problem and it is growing. And it is for this reason that I, along with my friend and colleague, Rep. Dave Weldon, M.D. (FL-15) have introduced the Genomic Research and Accessibility Act (H.R. 977), straightforward legislation that ends the practice of gene patenting. Genes are a product of nature and thus, should not be patentable. Patenting the gene for breast cancer (yes, breast cancer genes are patented) or any other gene is the analogous equivalent to patenting water, air, birds or diamonds.

Learn more by visiting my Web site and clicking on "ISSUES."

THE DISTRICT DIGEST DISPATCHES FROM THE 31ST



WAR IN IRAQ & VETERANS' ISSUES TAKE CENTER STAGE AT TOWN HALL FORUMS

This past April, I held district wide town hall forums on two major, interrelated issues that are on the forefront of Congress' – and the American people's – minds: the ongoing war in Iraq and health care for our veterans. On April 2 veterans from World War II through the current war in Iraq turned out to speak directly with the Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Bob Filner (CA-51), and me at a public forum hosted by American Legion Post 206 in Highland Park. The meeting gave everyone an opportunity to discuss the state of health services for our veterans in the wake of the Walter Reed scandal, mental health services for those suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD), and equity for Filipino veterans of World War II who fought under the American flag, but were denied benefits provided to other veterans. Several weeks later I met with constituents for an in-depth discussion on the war in Iraq at the Cathedral Center of St. Paul in Echo Park. Everyone who spoke voiced their frustration over the Administration's policy of open-ended war, and their desire to bring our brave troops home as soon as possible. You can learn more about the actions taken this year by Congress to end the war and improve health care for our veterans by visiting my Web site.



Veterans' issues were discussed at my April 2 town hall meeting. David Bloom, Jr., an Iraqi War veteran and the commander of American Legion Post 206 was our generous host.

CASEWORK Corner

My casework staff has over 30 years combined experience in helping you secure the services and benefits for which your tax dollars pay. Since January of this year, we have helped more than 286 constituents resolve issues with federal agencies such as the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), among others.

Highlight on PASSPORTS: You may have already heard about the passport backlog this year. My staff has helped more than 80 constituents obtain passports, and can assist you with your immediate travel needs.

Visit www.travel.state.gov for more information about travel guidelines, or call my office at (213) 483-1425. To learn more about the Casework process in my office, please visit the "CONSTITUENT SERVICES" section of my Web site.

STANDING STRONG, STANDING PROUD: UPDATES FROM OUR CONSTITUENT CADETS

As a Member of Congress, I have the distinct honor of nominating promising candidates to the United States service academies. I have taken great pride over the years in nominating a number of talented young people from my district to the academies, which are some of the most selective institutions of higher learning our country has to offer. This year I was able to catch up with a few of our 31st District cadets attending the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, NY, and congratulated them on all their accomplishments. Here are updates on how they're doing:



Adam Flick

- The United States Military Academy at West Point
- Class of 2007

During his four years at West Point, then-Cadet, now Second Lieutenant Adam Flick (center) received a truly international education, traveling to over 20 countries and participating in several exchange programs. When he graduated this past May, Cadet Flick earned the Commandant's Award for Physical Excellence, the Dean's Gold Star for maintaining a 3.67+ GPA, the Superintendent's Award for ranking in the top five percent of his class, and an honor's diploma in Spanish and Chinese. He will be stationed in Hawaii and deploy to Iraq in early 2008.



Anthony Mattazaro

- The United States Military Academy at West Point
- Class of 2007

A computer science major, then-Cadet, now Second Lieutenant Anthony Mattazaro helped lead West Point to win the 2007 Cyber Defense Exercise competition this past spring. Mattazaro graduated May 26 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and has since reported to Ft. Sill in Oklahoma for basic officer leader training. In about a year's time, Lieutenant Mattazaro will report to Ft. Hood, Texas, for the duration of his time in the Army.



Kimberly Jung

- The United States Military Academy at West Point
- Class of 2008

Last summer, Cadet Kimberly Jung (front) graduated from Airborne school at Ft. Benning, GA, and earned her parachutist wings. She also spent a month and a half in Hawaii shadowing a second lieutenant in a heavy engineer platoon, and was in Minneapolis for two weeks working on a research project for lung organogenesis. This summer Cadet Jung is in Kyrgyzstan for two months building houses with Habitat for Humanity before she moves on to Ft. Bliss, Texas, to work with the Corps of Engineers.

To learn more about the military service academy nomination process, visit the "STUDENTS" section of my Web site.





Congressman Xavier Becerra

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▶▶ ARE YOU CONNECTED TO YOUR CONGRESSMAN?

In February my Web site, <http://Becerra.House.Gov>, was recognized by the Congressional Management Foundation as the **BEST** in the House of Representatives, **RANKING #1 OUT OF 435!** Log on to <http://Becerra.House.Gov> to find out why!

SIGN-UP

Stay connected by signing on to my email list. You will receive the monthly "Becerra Bulletin" e-newsletter, along with notices of upcoming town halls, events and media appearances.



Time to AirTalk on KPCC 89.3 FM

Dear Friend,

Tune in to **AirTalk with LARRY MARTE** on KPCC 89.3 FM this morning at 10:00 a.m. to hear Congressman Becerra discuss "SCHIP", the State Children's Health Insurance Program. This important federally-funded program provides health coverage to millions of uninsured children from low-to-moderate income families throughout the country. Congressman Becerra will be on at approximately 10:30 a.m.

Rep. Becerra will talk about the **Children's Health and Medicare Extension (CHAMPE) Act, H.R. 3162**, which passed in the House of Representatives this Wednesday. The bill reauthorizes SCHIP and expands coverage to over five million additional children, while making critical adjustments to Medicare that will ensure beneficiaries have access to physicians without seeing disruptive premium increases.

[Click here to listen to KPCC live](#), or if you miss the live program you can find the audio clip on the [AirTalk homepage after 8:00 a.m.](#)

MEDIA CENTER

Explore the many ways you can stay up-to-date on what I'm doing in Congress by visiting the Media Center. Watch video of floor statements, media appearances, hearings, and town hall meetings – or listen to them by subscribing to "Becerra Podcasts" on iTunes. Read the latest press releases, newsletters and news clips, or search the archives to find the information you are looking for. It's all here!

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Dozens of videos (like this one where I'm asking questions about foreign debt at a recent Budget Committee hearing) are ready for you to watch on my Web site.

CASEWORK

One of my most important duties as your representative in Congress is to assist you when dealing with federal agencies. My casework staff is ready to help you cut through the "red tape" and secure the services and benefits for which your tax dollars pay. Follow the basic steps on the Casework page to find out if I can help you.



ISSUES

Learn more about my legislative efforts, voting history and bill sponsorships by visiting the Issues page. The "Legislation in Focus" section features in depth information on many of the bills I am fighting to enact. You can even subscribe to a live feed that notifies you how I voted every time a vote is cast.



DROP BY THE OFFICE OR GIVE ME A CALL

<http://Becerra.House.gov>

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